

## Alarming State of Suicidal Deaths in Maharashtra

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### Abstract

Suicide implies an act of intentionally causing one's own death. The various vital factors responsible for suicide are psychiatric disorders, drug misuse, psychological states, culture, genetic, economic, family and social situations. About eight lakh people commit suicide worldwide every year, of these 1.35 lakh (17%) are residents of India (G.O.I. Report, 2012). Among the various states in India, highest total number of suicidal deaths is in Maharashtra to the extent of 153104, during the period of ten years (2004-2013). Keeping in view the gravity of the situation an attempt has been made to examine the intensity, nature, growth and S.M.R. (Suicidal Mortality Rate) of suicidal deaths with respect to professional and educational status of Maharashtra state from 2004 to 2013.

Mean value, proportion, Average Annual Compound Growth Rates of suicidal deaths and S.M.R. are reckoned and results are presented using Histogram and Pie charts. Suicidal deaths in Maharashtra have ascended from 14729 in 2004 to 16622 in 2013 at an A.A.C.G.R. of 1.30%, indicating a rising trend. S.M.R. is sufficiently high varies between the range of 13.15 to 14.82. Among the various heads of profession, self-employed and housewives figures about 71 percent of total suicidal deaths. In case of educational status, the heads of uneducated, primary and middle standard constitute 67% of total suicides in Maharashtra during the period of analysis.

**KEYWORDS:** Suicidal deaths, farmers, unemployed, psychiatric disorders, women.

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Suicide implies an act of intentionally causing one's own death (Williams & Wilkins, 2006). Historically suicide came to be regarded as a sin in Christian Europe in 452 A.D., as the work of the devil. The matter remained unsettled and controversial and Catholic Doctrine was not clear on this subject until the later 17<sup>th</sup> century. Renaissance period was marked by shift in attitude towards suicides and it began to be defended on the grounds of reason and nature in certain circumstances. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, suicide was considered as a sin but being caused by insanity and was illegal. By the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, suicides became legal in much of the western world. It remains a criminal offence in most Muslim majority nations. In India it used to be illegal but the government decided to repeal the law in 2014 (Section 309 I.P.C.).

The Government of India classifies a death as suicide, if it meets the following criteria:-

- It is an unnatural death.
- The intent to die originated within the person.
- There is a reason for the person to end his or her life. The reason may have been specified in a suicide note or specified.

The various vital factors responsible for suicide are psychiatric disorders, drug misuse, psychological states, culture, genetic, family and social situations (Howlon,

2012). Among the common causes of suicides mental illness is the most common cause of suicide and untreated depression leads to suicidal tendencies. People with mental illness live in constant state of despair and numerous times even medications and therapies too do not help. Besides depression, illness is related to mental state can be in form of anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Personality disorder is another term, which is closely related to mental illness and people with personality disorders have trouble maintaining relationships, jobs and coping with life. Borderline Personality Disorder (B.P.D.) is most associated with suicide risk and is characterised by impulsive behaviour, unstable relationships and difficulty regarding emotions. Abusive and stressful relationships take their toll on the mental health of a person. Break-ups of relationships too cause intense despair, anxiety, guilt and panic. This emotional pain may also lead to suicide.

Chronic pain or terminal illness, which implies dealing with pain on everyday basis and impairing the ability to function properly. Terminal illness leads to depression as scope for recovery is bleak and affected person may want to end it all. A person experiencing trauma and a victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and trauma in war may end up with P.T.S.D. (Post-Trauma Stress Disorder). Such people keep on relieving their post-traumatic experiences and may feel helpless and intense anxiety may overcome them. They may turn to suicide as the last resort. Some may resort to drug addiction (substance abuse). Consistent use of drugs and alcohol builds up high tolerance to them, altering brain functioning and neurotransmitters. Many people get addicted and are likely to get depressed with life. They contemplate suicide as the way to get out of addiction trap.

Unemployment may lead to feelings of a purposeless life and isolation, which leads to depression. This may give rise to suicidal tendencies. Financial stress takes a major toll on people. Many millionaires commit suicide when they become bankrupt. A series of accumulated debts put a huge burden on individuals and they may consider suicide as a last resort.

About eight lakh people commit suicide worldwide every year, of these 1.35 lakh (17%) are residents of India (G.O.I. Report, 2012). Among the various states in India, highest total number of suicidal deaths are in Maharashtra to the extent of 153104, during the period of analysis (2004-2013). In spite of Maharashtra, which is an industrially developed state, with massive business activity, magnitude of suicidal deaths are extremely high. The reason is, the more you develop, the more the expectations and more the disappointments (Vijayakumar, 2013). Another reason could be that this state has a better literacy rate as compare to other states in India, so that cause better reporting system. Moreover the state has experienced migration from the rural areas to the cities and migration has a big role to play in suicides. Ascending agrarian crisis in the state is a major cause behind escalating suicidal deaths. Farmer reeling under debts, frequent droughts, crop failure, and non-realization of prices for agricultural products are some of the reasons which drive farmers to take the extreme step. Keeping in view the gravity of the situation it becomes imperative

1. To examine the intensity, nature, growth and Suicidal Mortality Rate (S.M.R.) of suicidal deaths in Maharashtra with respect to professional status from 2004 to 2013.

2. To analyse the growth and nature of suicides in Maharashtra with respect to educational status from 2004 to 2013

## METHODOLOGY

The data on suicidal deaths, with respect to professional status in Maharashtra from 2004 to 2013 is subjected to primary and graphical analysis. To examine nature and intensity of suicides with respect to profession during the period of analysis, the different professions were divided into eight categories (Heads) namely, Housewife, Service, Student, Unemployed, Self-employed, Retired persons and Others are scrutinized. The head of Service is further divided into three sub-heads, they are, Government, Private and Public Sector Undertaking. Similarly the head of Self-employed is divided into four sub-heads of Business, Professional activity, Farming/Agriculture and Others. While examining suicidal deaths with respect to educational status, again eight categories (Standard Heads) were taken namely, Uneducated, Primary, Middle, Matriculate /Secondary, Intermediate/Higher Secondary, Diploma, Graduate and Post-graduate & above.

Suicide Mortality Rate (SMR) is also computed, which is defined as the number of suicides reported per lakh population of a specific year. This rate is universally taken as a realistic indicator since it balances the effect of growth in population. To ascertain the growth of suicides under various heads of professional status, during the period of analysis, average annual compound growth rates were computed using the following formula.

$$Y = a b^t e^u$$

$Y$  = Yearly expenditure on Police  
 $t$  = Time period  
 $u$  = Stochastic term

$a$  and  $b$  are constants which were estimated by principle of least square using following formula

$$\log b = \frac{n \sum t \log y - (\sum t) (\log y)}{n \sum t^2 - (\sum t)^2}$$

$$\log a = \frac{\sum \log y}{n} - (\log b) \frac{\sum t}{n}$$

$$\text{Average C.G.R.} = (b - 1) 100$$

### Sources of Data

	Type of Data	Source
i)	Year wise suicidal deaths under various heads with respect to profession in Maharashtra from 2004 to 2013.	Various annual issues of Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India, National Crime Records Bureau, G.O.I. from 2004 to 2013.
ii)	Year wise suicidal deaths under various heads with respect to education in Maharashtra from 2004 to 2013.	Various annual issues of Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India, National Crime Records Bureau, G.O.I. from 2004 to 2013.
iii)	Adjusted Mid-year projected population of Maharashtra for the years 2004 to 2013.	Registrar General of India, M.H.A.

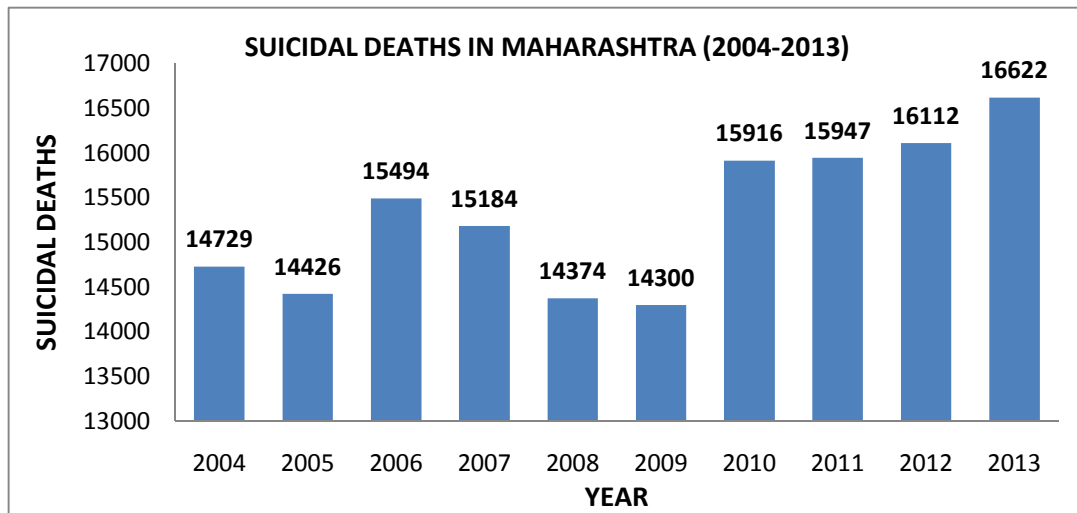
### Limitations of the study

1. Classification of suicides in Maharashtra with respect to professional status is made strictly according to the availability and pattern adopted by National Crime Record Bureau, G.O.I.
2. Due to unavailability of data, gaps in data are filled by the average of figures of previous year and next year.

### DISCUSSION

#### Suicides in India with respect to professional status (2004-2013)

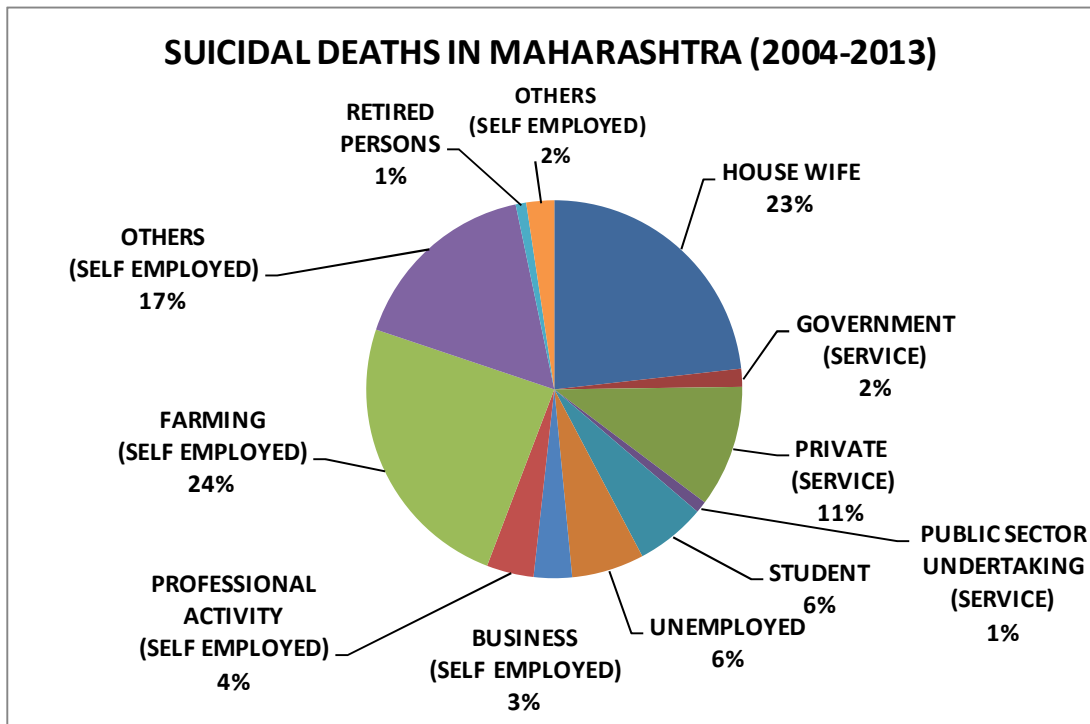
Clearly shown in table 1 given in appendix that suicidal deaths in Maharashtra have ascended from 14729 in 2004 to 16622 in 2013 at an A.A.C.G.R. of 1.30 %, indicating a rising trend. Suicide Mortality Rate (S.M.R.) is sufficiently high, which varies between the range of 13.15 to 14.82, highest being S.M.R. which is defined as the number of suicidal deaths reported per lakh of population, which is universally taken as a realistic indicator since it balances the effect of growth in population.



Among the various professions, highest number of suicides during the period of analysis (2004-2013) in Maharashtra is by self employed persons collectively constituting 72939 and experiencing an A.A.C.G.R. of 0.58%. Among the self employed, Farmers (36848) had the maximum number of suicides followed by Others (25053), Professionals (6106) and Businessmen (4932). The trend of suicides is negative for farmers which has reduced from 4147 deaths in 2004 to 3146 in 2013, where as it is positive for rest of them.

The problem of farmer suicides has been severe across large swatches of the country and specifically in Maharashtra state. It calls for immediate and well planned policy interventions (Mishra, 2006). Farmer reeling under debts, frequent droughts, crop failure, and non-realization of prices for agricultural products are some of the reasons which drive farmers to take the extreme step (Biswas, 2015). Between 1995 and 2014, more than 300,000 farmers – cultivators and agricultural labourers – have committed suicide in India. That is roughly equivalent to a staggering figure of one farmer suicide every 30 minutes. (Basu, Das & Mishra, 2016) The phenomenon of suicide by farmers, on such a large scale, is especially worrisome for India because the majority of the workforce is still dependent on agriculture for its livelihood. According to data

from the latest census in 2011, about 55% of Indian workers were employed in agriculture, either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers (Basu, Das & Mishra, 2016) Public institutions must step in to provide appropriate cushion to effected farmers, thereby helping them to step out of the vicious circle of poverty.



Suicidal deaths among housewives constitute the second largest head i.e. 35119 during the period of analysis and experienced almost a stable trend, highest being in the year 2006 to the extent of 3653. Indian society in general and Maharashtra in particular is plagued by the social evil of Dowry since a long time, besides high rate of violence against women comprising rape, kidnapping & abduction, assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, cruelty by husband or his relatives, importation of girls, immoral traffic, indecent representation of women etc. The advent of 21<sup>st</sup> century has opened many new vistas for women in the country but irrespective of educational and financial independence of women, magnitude of violence against women persists at a large scale. The gruesome repercussion of the violence is sometimes the occurrence of suicides. The increase in incidence of such cases in a society signifies subjugation of women through violent means in the state.

The role of women police is advocated by various studies as they can empathize with the women victim (House wives) and the latter may feel more comfortable in reporting the violence in comparison to their male counterparts. The studies have suggested that greater use of dispute resolution by women police in dealing with domestic disputes could reduce domestic violence. The need of the hour is to modify police training, sensitize them regarding the emerging social issues and overhaul of police system. (Mangai Natarajan, 2006).

Health care system for women in particular in the state of Maharashtra has to be improved, which is presently having dismal presence in rural areas. The state faces a growing need to fix its basic health concerns to secure accessible and quality maternal

and child healthcare among marginalised communities (Jayaraman, 2016). Prolonged illness causes frustration among the women patients and sometimes ends up in suicide. Special facilities should be crafted for patients with psychiatric disorders in the existing infrastructure so as to early diagnose and appropriate cure is done.

Among the servicemen, highest magnitude of average annual suicides is by employees working in private sector i.e. 1579.9, followed by Government employees (236.1) and employees in P.S.U.s. (151.8) during the period of ten years (2004-2013). Government employees and employees in P.S.U.s. have generally less stressful working life as they are covered under service security rules, having fixed number of working hours and almost certain annual salary increments and other emoluments. Private sector employees are always at the discretion of their bosses, who fix huge targets, which remain unaccomplished and above all are mostly underpaid. This causes disturbance in their family life. Some of them who could not cope with the pressure might commit suicide.

Average annual suicides by students are 909.3, which constitute about 6% of total suicides. Pressure of studies and race for high percentage to secure seats in reputed professional colleges and then to earn hefty pay packages put undue stress in their lives. Some who fail to fulfil the aspirations of their parents and other family members get frustrated in life and may get into depression and resort to drugs. Easy availability of narcotic substances due to drug trafficking across the international border, frustration due to unfulfilled high aspirations, peer pressure and negative influence of a family member are primary reasons for rising trend in consumption of drugs in the state. It is an alarming situation, which pose a huge threat for the vulnerable youth. Rural youth are particularly susceptible to the influence of this evil.

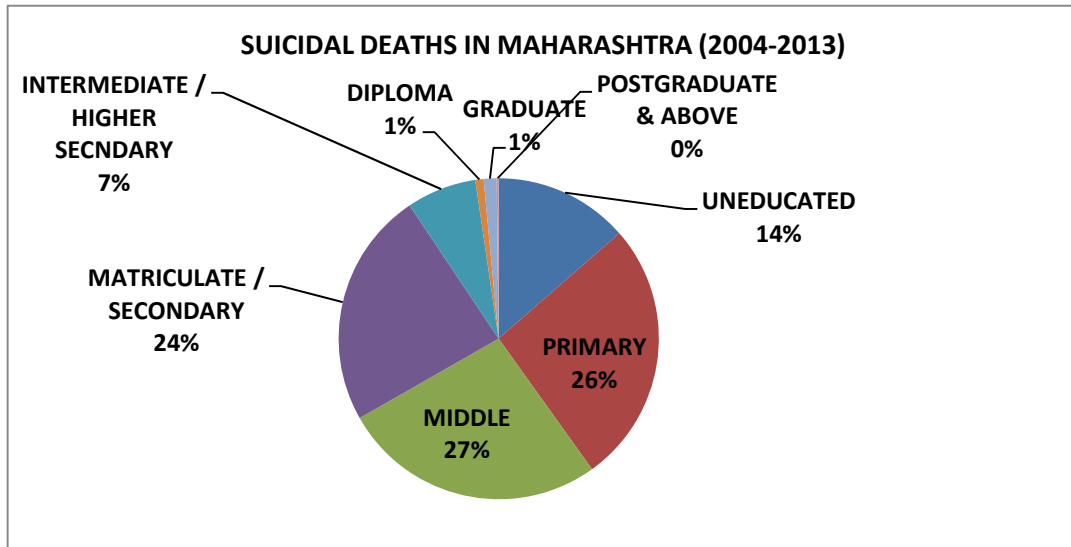
The police department can play an important role in curbing the worsening scenario. It can launch an awareness drive with N.G.O.s. and civil society members and distribute literature highlighting the evils of drug abuse among the rural youth. The drug mafia which is flourishing in the state can be tethered in by effective and ethical policing only. The drug mafia operating since long in North and South Americas is being tackled primarily by police in the forefront. It's a war between the mafia on one hand and police at the other. Discussions on the drug problem in state always lean towards political bickering and blame games begin. Sprucing up the police force to tackle it is the answer.

The suicides committed by unemployed people i.e. 9382 constitute roughly 6% to total suicidal deaths in Maharashtra during the period of analysis (2004-2013) having AACGR of -1.92%. Unemployment causes severe economic, social and psychic stresses among its victims. Put together, these create an environment that threatens the peace in life of unemployed person, particularly among educated youth who develop a feeling of being left behind or "excluded" from the mainstream developmental activities of the society.

The category of retired person among suicides in Maharashtra with respect to profession has a magnitude of 1368 during the period of analysis (2004-2013) with A.A.C.G.R. of 1.14%. In such cases even social isolation or loneliness leads to mental health conditions and negative feelings or even suicide. Humans are social animals and when they are isolated due to circumstances they feel lonely.

### **Suicides in India with respect to educational status (2004-2013)**

Clearly shown in table 2 given in the appendix that suicidal deaths with respect to educational status for the period of analysis (2004-2013) is highest by people having middle standard education to the extent of 40830, followed by primary standard (40589), matriculate/secondary (36492) and uneducated people (20804). Collectively these four heads constitute 91% of total suicides in Maharashtra. Education less than intermediate/higher secondary restraints their prospects for finding jobs in private, as well as public sector. Whatever menial jobs even if they manage to get will not be much rewarding. Unemployment leads to lower living standards, high degree of income inequality and poverty.



Highest A.A.C.G.R. during these ten years is experienced in case of people with graduate degree (6.69%) followed by diploma holders and above (6.02). Though these people with highest education degrees constitute only about 2 percent of total suicidal deaths but surprisingly there is rising trend since 2004, possible out of frustration and depression for not getting jobs which match to their education and aspirations.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is concluded from the study that intensity of suicides is quite high in Maharashtra. Among various professions, suicidal deaths by self-employed constitute about forty percent of total suicidal deaths in India, followed by the head of house wife (19%). Effective healthcare setup, war against drugs, overhaul police training & sensitize them regarding the emerging social issues, role of N.G.Os. and civil society can contribute profoundly in reducing magnitude of suicidal deaths. The problem of farmer suicides has become severe across large swatches of the country, and calls for immediate and well planned multi-dimensional policy interventions in order to provide appropriate cushion to effected farmers, thereby helping them to step out of the vicious circle of poverty. Creation of employment opportunities, easy finance facilities for self employed, business persons and professionals, timely & appropriate counseling of students and elderly persons can save many valuable lives.

The four educational heads of middle, primary and matriculate and uneducated people constitute 91% of total suicides in India. Illiteracy is the foremost hurdle in the path of economic development. Large sized working population can turn into demographic dividend only if it is sufficiently educated and skilled. Vocational training and

education is of paramount importance in the present scenario in India. Moreover it is a pre-requisite for peaceful existence and public order.

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## APPENDICES

TABLE 1: SUICIDES IN MAHARASHTRA WITH RESPECT TO PROFESSION (2004-2013)

Profession \ year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	Average	A.A.C.G.R.
House wife	3501	3582	3653	3563	3384	3383	3639	3716	3350	3348	35119	3511.9	-0.43
Service	2021	2024	878	1951	2006	1047	2187	2215	2675	2674	19678	1967.8	5.20
Government	244	300	482	226	157	154	183	195	189	231	2361	236.1	-5.25
Private	1614	1606	267	1590	1653	730	1857	1934	2264	2284	15799	1579.9	4.78
Public sector undertaking	163	118	129	135	196	163	147	86	222	159	1518	151.8	1.37
Student	959	784	882	793	757	812	1056	988	921	1141	9093	909.3	2.57
Unemployed	1078	1029	944	1039	873	873	908	658	964	1016	9382	938.2	-1.92
Self employed	7126	6743	7624	7639	7030	6684	7660	7709	7154	7570	72939	7293.9	0.58
Business	532	390	491	444	469	419	445	610	577	555	4932	493.2	2.58
Professional activity	319	393	709	747	540	630	1123	786	429	430	6106	610.6	3.19
Farming / agriculture	4147	3926	4453	4238	3802	2872	3141	3337	3786	3146	36848	3684.8	-3.19
Others	2128	2034	1971	2210	2219	2763	2951	2976	2362	3439	25053	2505.3	5.29
Retired persons	123	121	140	163	133	136	117	147	146	142	1368	136.8	1.14
Others	89	143	252	36	191	365	349	514	902	731	3572	357.2	29.67
Total	14729	14426	15494	15184	14374	14300	15916	15947	16112	16622	153104	15310.4	1.30
Suicide mortality rate	14.47	13.98	14.82	14.33	13.39	13.15	14.46	14.19	14.05	14.30	14.11	---	---

Source: Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India, National Crime Record Bureau, Ministry of Home, G.O.I.

TABLE 2: SUICIDES IN MAHARASHTRA WITH RESPECT TO EDUCATIONAL STATUS (2004-2013)

Education \ year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	Average	A.A.C.G.R.
Uneducated	2565	2382	2263	2136	2000	1960	1901	1853	1842	1902	20804	2080.4	-3.49
Primary	4063	3984	4080	4187	4100	3605	4165	4278	4206	3921	40589	4058.9	0.09
Middle	3583	3824	4426	4278	3861	4077	4079	4054	4164	4484	40830	4083	1.27
Matriculate / secondary	3329	3058	3384	3266	3186	3279	4247	4140	4245	4358	36492	3649.2	4.04
Intermediate / Higher secondary	926	868	1000	978	965	1043	1131	1256	1209	1433	10809	1080.9	4.90
Diploma	91	118	111	135	91	95	132	128	186	173	1260	126	6.02
Graduate	148	156	204	178	149	217	221	212	235	308	2028	202.8	6.69
Postgraduate & above	24	36	26	26	22	24	40	26	25	43	292	29.2	2.50
Total	14729	14426	15494	15184	14374	14300	15947	15947	16112	16622	153135	15313.5	1.31

Source: Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India, National Crime Record Bureau, Ministry of Home, G.O.I.